Back in Business: MTC to Hold Official Reopening Celebration One Year after Flood

Less than a year after Hurricane Ivan made 10 miles of the Montour Trail impassable, the Montour Trail Council has achieved what once seemed impossible—reopening the trail.

A grand "reopening" celebration will be held on September 16, at 3:00 p.m., at the former Wickes parking lot off Montour Run Road, to thank the many people and organizations who have helped to put these popular 10 miles of trail, from mile zero in Moon Township to Findlay Township, back in service.

Robinson and Moon Township work crews laid four miles of new limestone surface earlier this month, restoring the Montour Trail's western segment to an uninterrupted 22 miles. A short segment near mile zero has not been completely restored due to pending water line installation, but is passable.

Among those whom the Montour Trail Council will thank on September 16 are:

- Findlay, Moon and Robinson Township elected officials and road crews.
- Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and the county's Public Works Department.
- Grants from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for $50,000, Allegheny County Regional Asset District for $75,000; Laurel Foundation for $25,000.
- Individuals who donated over $22,000 designated for trail repair and gave hundreds of volunteer work hours.
- Trail repair contractor BKG, Inc.

The restored trail will also be highlighted on September 10 as the Montour Trail Council hosts its largest annual event, the Montour Trail/ IKEA half-marathon, 5K run and walk, which typically draws over 1,000 participants. In addition, the third annual Tour the Montour bike ride will be held on September 24 starting at mile zero.

Bruce Barron

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Trail Talk
from the Editor's Desk

It is with bittersweet feelings that I declare this to be my final "Trail Talk." My family and work commitments have forced me to pare back my extensive volunteer work, so I will no longer be the “voice” behind the MTC Trail Letter. I have enjoyed contributing to the MTC in my small way. I always say that some of us build trails, some of us pay to maintain them and some of us contribute in other, less obvious, ways. Obviously, I fell into that latter category. I hope my contribution was worthwhile during the years that I was editor of this publication.

The good news is that Charlie Forquer, who has long been the man behind the scenes of this newsletter, will be taking over the position. His teenage daughter, Colleen, will be helping him in bringing you “all things MTC” on a bi-monthly basis.

Charlie has been the Circulation Editor, which basically means he has had the unglamorous task of sorting and mailing the newsletter. Anyone who has ever dealt with the bulk mail center on California Avenue downtown knows only too well the effort Charlie has put into getting the Trail Letter to you. Now Charlie (and Colleen) will be gathering news, writing and laying out the text and, yes, mailing the newsletter every other month. I thank him for his offer to take on this project and wish him well. (I’ll be helping him out on the next newsletter, but as of 2006 he’ll be on his own!)

As for me, I recently took a job working for a national non-profit that has an in-house publishing team. I will be a technical editor for them, as I continue to run my own desktop publishing company, ASCO Media. Since my son is starting preschool this fall and my daughter’s non-academic activities are growing, I find the needs of my children outweigh my desire to volunteer in the community. I still hope to be able to contribute to the MTC and various other organizations in a less prominent position.

To all my MTC friends, I thank you for your help and support over the past few years. This has been a labor of love, for sure, but one that has made me feel like an integral part of the ever-growing Montour Trail and the national Rails to Trails movement.

I hope to enjoy reading someone else’s work as the newsletter gets passed to yet another editor. I will miss being a part of it, but I am grateful to have had this opportunity and wish all the MTC volunteers and Trail users a happy and prosperous future.

Happy Trails!
Astrid Cook

Newsletter Deadline
All articles for the November/December Trail Letter will be due no later than October 10, 2005

The Montour Trail Council is an all volunteer organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a fifty-five mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.
Friends’ Meetings and Work Parties

♦ MTC Board Meeting, every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Peter at 412-884-1835 for more information or to get on the agenda.

♦ Cecil Events:
Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil-Henderson Road; other months meet at the MTC Offices, Call 412-257-2553 for more information. Work & Clean-up party, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. (Subject to change; check information boards.) Meet at the Storage shed at Hendersonville. Call 412-257-2553 for more info.

♦ Moon/Robinson Events:
Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the communities of Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 412-889-3020 for more information. Work & Clean-up party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412-262-3748 for more information and location.

♦ Findlay/North Fayette Events:
Friends of the Trail, call Don at 724-899-3695 or Pete at 412-788-4136 for more information. Work & Clean-up party, every fourth Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 412-788-4136 for more information.

♦ Bethel Park Events:
Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. For Clifton Road Bridge Committee meetings, contact Peter Kohnke at 412-884-1835 for more information.

Work & Clean-up party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O’Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

♦ South Hills Trailblazing:
Friends of the Trail Work & Clean-up party, last Saturday of every month. All volunteers are welcome. For more information, call Paul McKeown at 412-833-6692.

♦ Fort Cherry Events:
Friends of the Trail Meeting, first Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work & Clean-up parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Joe Seibel at 724-693-2523.

♦ Peters Township Events:
Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on Work & Clean-up parties, please contact Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at mcimgrund@adelphia.net.

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Calendar of Events

**September 2005**

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IKEA Marathon — September 10
Montour "Flood" Reopening — September 16
MTC Board Meeting — September 19
Tour the Montour — September 24

**October 2005**

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Bethel Park/Peters Penny Day — October 8
MTC Board Meeting — October 17

For updated information, check out our new Events Calendar at [www.montourtrail.org/events](http://www.montourtrail.org/events)
And the Prez sez...

Hello to the members and friends of the Montour Trail. I trust your summer has gone well and you have enjoyed many hours on the Montour Trail.

The Montour Trail Council has some very significant announcements in this newsletter issue. First is the good news pertaining to the trail restoration in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan. On August 2, Moon Township’s road crew headed by Jim Henkemeyer completed restoration of the trail in Moon Township. On August 12, Robinson Township’s road crew headed by Joe Bonkowski completed the restoration of the trail in Robinon Township. A special reopening ceremony will be held at the Wicks parking lot on Friday, September 16. Please come to celebrate the trail’s return and join us in thanking our numerous partners. (See details on page 1.)

On Wednesday, August 10, President Bush signed the new Transportation Enhancement Bill. The Montour Trail was very fortunate to receive $1,800,000 in this bill to help build five new bridges and restore two trestle bridges between RT.19 in Peters Township and Morgantown Road in Cecil Township.

I mentioned previously that you were one of the many frequent users of the Montour Trail this summer. Well, I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with quite a few of you the weekend of August 14. This opportunity arose while I was helping Bill Orr with ticket sales for the Outback Steakhouse event. One of the most surprising aspects of the Montour Trail is the interesting people you meet. In addition to many of the local trail users (including Tim Killmeyer’s neighbor), I had the pleasure of meeting the following people:

A couple from Erie who transported their bicycles on a trailer attached to their motorcycle;
A young man born and raised in Siberia who has been here four years and loves the trail (he said there are no bike trails in Siberia to enjoy);
A couple from Cleveland who came here just to ride the Montour.

Finally, I spoke to Jim Orleman, a council member who retired from the company for which I work. Jim stopped and said he had to tell me this story: Jim had just ridden about 14 miles on the trail with a couple biking from Seattle, Washington, to the East Coast. Indeed, a very interesting weekend.

Dennis Pfeiffer, President

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

An important message to all our Trail friends: The Endowment Fund is open for business again!

You may recall that we opened our Montour Trail Endowment Fund in the fall of 2004 and were off to a promising start, with $11,000 deposited in a period of one month. However, on September 16, Tropical Storm Ivan destroyed the first nine miles of Trail, and we lost surface of between 8 inches and 8 feet deep as a result. That loss made it necessary to direct our attention away from the fund to repair and restoration.

Thanks to our Trail friends and supporters we are 98 percent restored! We plan to run our “IKEA Half-Marathon” in normal fashion beginning at IKEA on September 10 and our 6 to 44 mile “Tour The Montour” beginning at Mile Zero on September 24.

Now we are confident to ask for your help in getting our Fund back on track. Even during our voluntary suspension of funding, we received $30,000 in pledges that will be honored by the end of the year.

Why do we need your money? Like many other organizations, we have two financial concerns, original construction and long-term maintenance. While federal, state and even local grants are often available during construction, they are far less likely for maintenance. Then, too, not all needed funds and equipment costs are covered by federal and municipal funds. That is where endowment funds are vital in addition to annual giving.

A word about our Fund and where your money is invested. The MTC has contracted with the Pittsburgh Foundation to use its expertise in receiving and authorizing ultimate disbursements. It is an excellent local institution with some $700 million it stewards in client funds.

The funds, once deposited, are conservatively invested in a “pooled” account among equity, balanced and bond mutual funds (mostly the stellar America Funds Group), along with some cash or equivalents. Allocation is directed by the Pittsburgh-based brokerage firm Hefren-Tillotson. All gifts to the Trail are tax-deductible.

Future articles in our newsletter will explore ways in which Endowment gifts can also provide you with current tax-favored income or reduce estate taxes.

Please contact Kelly Uranker at the Pittsburgh Foundation (412-391-5122) or any board member to contribute. Or go to our Web site, montourtrail.org, and click on “Members and Volunteers” for further instructions. Thanks for your help!

John Hooton
What’s Your Sign? For One Brentwood High Senior, it’s MTC

Thanks to the efforts of Benjamin Diehl, five new trailhead signs are being fabricated, assembled and installed. Ben’s efforts include constructing sign frames from pressure treated lumber, determining the appropriate location at each trailhead for the signs, digging the post holes, and installing them.

Ben volunteered for this project after it was advertised in the Montour Trail-Letter and his work on these signs will fulfill part of his Brentwood High school graduation requirements. Each student’s graduation project is worth one credit and requires a minimum of fifty hours, and students are encouraged to invest those fifty hours in a civic non-profit organization. To gain credit for his completed work, Ben also must make a Powerpoint-based presentation at school.

Most of these trailhead signs are in a new format which displays the trail rules, the sources of funding, a colorful map of the trail, and trailhead milepost and GPS coordinates. These coordinates could be especially helpful in directing any emergency medivac helicopter to the site. The trail council is supplying the sign graphics inserts and providing funding for all materials. Ben is installing the new signs at trailheads in Clairton, Large, Boggs, Cliff Mine, and Old Beaver Grade Road.

Trail Council President Dennis Pfeiffer expressed his appreciation noting, “Ben reviewed the previous sign frame design and added reinforcement where it seemed to need it. I also like the decorative touch he added to the top with a router.”

Ben’s father Rod is a regular volunteer at South Hills Friends work parties.

In a related effort, Bill Zinn and Ned Williams worked together with Jefferson Hills Public Works to install “Share the Road” and “Montour Trail” signs along Peters Creek Road. The Montour Trail Council purchased these signs and chose locations for them and Jefferson Hills Department installed them. Cyclists and walkers using the Snowden Road to Gill Hall Road trail segment can use these signs to point the way for extending their outing along Peters Creek Road. This road has very low motor vehicle traffic and is scenic.

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Water Transmission Main Project to Temporarily Affect Trail Usage

After years of planning, design, obtaining easements, and permitting, The Municipal Authority of the Township of Robinson (MATR) has issued a Notice to Proceed for the construction of a 30 inch diameter water main nearly 17,500 feet long. As this article is written, work has not yet commenced, but it is expected to start shortly. When it begins, all trail users from mile zero to about mile three will take notice, since much of this waterline will be located along or under the Montour Trail.

The water transmission line connection starts near Route 51 and ends along a hillside close to Beaver Grade Road. During construction, the contractor will build temporary trails as needed to allow for trail traffic to continue with as little disruption as possible. The MATR has paid a fair sum of money for this right of way, which will be added to the Montour Trail endowment fund mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter. Additionally, the Montour Trail will receive the following improvements as a result of this project:

1. Storm water drainage improvements.
2. Repairs to areas affected by flooding.
3. Transition resurfacing at Hassam Road.
4. Trail resurfacing from Route 51 to Beaver Grade Road.
5. A new water fountain near Beaver Grade Road.

While construction is expected to last nearly one [Continued on p. 6]
Tree Seedlings vs. Knotweed: Battling Nature on the Trail

Trail-Letter readers may recall that in May of this year, a 12-person AmeriCorps team, aided by volunteers of the MTC and the Montour Run Watershed Association (MRWA), undertook a productive two-week project to remove flood debris from the Montour Run and its banks. During the course of that project, one of the AmeriCorps workers challenged the MRWA to sponsor a project to plant trees on the stream banks with help from the team. The team was scheduled to return to western Pennsylvania in June to carry out a facilities improvement project in Raccoon State Park, and they would be willing to help us plant trees on their weekend days off.

This was an opportunity that we couldn’t pass up! We quickly contacted nurseries to find a source of supply for tree seedlings. We also scouted sections of the Montour Run’s banks that could most benefit by the addition of trees and quickly settled on a ¼-mile stretch just upstream of the Enlow Tunnel in Findlay and North Fayette Townships. This section was lacking in tall trees to shade the stream and to help anchor the soil against erosion due to flooding. We chose the weekend of June 25th for the tree planting.

The two-day effort by the AmeriCorps team members and volunteers began with an attack on Japanese knotweed on Saturday. Using machetes, weedwhackers, sickles and the West Ridge Community Church’s brush hog, we cut access lanes and clearings out of the forest of Japanese knotweed that covered both banks of the stream. On Sunday we set out, planted, fertilized and watered 125 seedlings of pin oak, silver maple, red maple and black willow. Six AmeriCorps team members and eleven volunteers from the MRWA, MTC and West Ridge Church took part, many working on both days.

Some time has elapsed since the weekend of the tree planting. While we fully expected the knotweed to resume growing, we were unprepared for its prodigious rate of growth, which appears to be about one foot a week on average. We are currently trying to re-clear enough space around each tree seedling to ensure that it receives enough sunlight to grow strong. We have some strategies in mind for dealing with (and hopefully defeating) the knotweed in the near future, but we have a lot to learn about what agent or process might weaken it for the long term.

We would not, and could not, have undertaken this worthwhile effort without the suggestion and support of the AmeriCorps team. Local volunteers who took part include Trace Allen, Mark Fedosick, Linda Giangiodano, Frank Jagerski, Jan and Warren Kooi, Carolyn Lake, Barbara Mazan, Bill Orr, Stan Sattinger and John Wasco.

Stan Sattinger

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Water Main Work to Disrupt Trail Use, cont. from p. 5

year, work along areas of the Trail should proceed quickly.

Safety for all involved, contractors and pedestrians is an important criterion to allow the work to continue at a swift pace. All trail users should remember the following safety tips:

1. Do not walk up to the excavation during construction. Visibility for the operators from the machinery is limited.
2. Observe all work from a distance of 100 feet or greater.
3. Use temporary trails when they are constructed.

We are confident that the end product from this construction will allow for years of enjoyable trail usage, and hope that we all can be patient while the work takes place.
Welcome New Members

The Montour Trail Council would like to welcome these new members and thank them for their support. We would also like to thank all of our members who have renewed their membership and remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.

NEW MEMBERS
Charles Boburka  
Donald Dutton  
Bernadette Fincke  
Forest Grove Elementary PTA  
James P. Frantti  
Frank Gardner  
Brian Gehringer  
Mr. Wayne Henry  
Teri Hudson  
Susan Lynn Kubiak  
Diane Labuskes  
Ron Lane  
Jahn H. Mentzer  
Tony Poli & Rosalie Barsotti  
K. Oliver Rea  
Membership Chair - Jerry Agin

John Sprouse  
Maria Withum  

BENEFACCTORS
Jon W. Erdner  
Phyllis McChesney  
K. Oliver Rea  
E. Steven White  

LEADER’S CIRCLE
Forest Grove Elementary PTA  
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffry M. Kessel  
Mark Schnurer

Twilight Trail Entrances Human, Pet Alike

Over 500 people of all ages, many dogs and one very small horse showed up at St. Petersburg Center in Peters Township on Friday July 22nd to participate in the Twilight Trail Walk III fund raiser for the West Peters Trail Construction Fund. A 1.5-mile section of Arrowhead Trail was lit with over 600 luminarias for a three-mile round trip walk. The event was a great success and raised around $4,000 to add to the fund.

Participants enjoyed cookies and drinks donated by Parkhurst Dining service and entertainment by jazz piano player John Garrick. Also there to entertain were the Eat’n Park Cookie and the St. Petersburg Ice Creamery Cow. The event was sponsored by our two title sponsors Dr. & Mrs. Timothy P. Weyrich and the Weavertown Environmental Group. Other sponsors include St. Petersburg Ice Creamery, Pittsburgh Children’s Foundation, The Eye Gallery, Subway at 505 Valleybrook Road, Coca Cola, Parkhurst Dining Service and Eat’n Park. Many raffle prizes were also donated by local businesses.

Events like this would not take place without all of the great volunteers that worked hard to make it happen. Many thanks to volunteers Jim Robbins, Karen Robbins, Craig Robbins, Jane Engel, Jessica Stricker, Linda Gallagher, Mark Imgrind, Mark Sefer, John Hooton, Berenice Hooton, Shirley Cuban, John Murphy, Jamie Headley, Event Director Sue Headley, Peter Kohnle, Mark Mendelsohn, Jesse Mendelsohn, John Kozak, Marcia Ewig, Mary Kay Hines, Erin Long and Kelli Merritt.

If you’ve never joined in the fun of a lighted night walk on the trail, stay tuned for next year’s event, planned to be held again sometime near the middle of the summer 2006.

Mark Imgrind

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

- I want to spread the word. Please send me additional flyers.
- I have written my Legislator and County Commissioners asking them to support the trail.
- My organization would like to provide a letter of endorsement.
- I know a group interested in a presentation.

STUDENT / SENIORS $15
INDIVIDUAL $25
FAMILY $35
SUPPORTING $50
SUSTAINING $100
BENEFACCTOR $250
LEADERS CIRCLE $500 + up

I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council. (Membership is tax deductible)
I wish to make an additional tax deductible contribution of $ to the Montour Trail Council to help make the Montour Trail a reality. (Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME ________________________________________________
ADDRESS ________________________________________________
CITY ___________________________________________________
STATE __________ ZIP ________________
PHONE (daytime) ___________ (evening) ________________
E-MAIL ________________________________________________

By applying for membership in the Montour Trail Council, I indicate my support of its goals.

SIGNATURE ________________________________________________

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL  
P.O. BOX 11866  
PITTSBURGH PA. 15226-0866

DON’T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308, or Combined Federal Campaign Contributor Choice option #9308, where you work.
Needed: CDLs or Willing to Train

The Montour Trail has only one volunteer who has a CDL license, and he cannot always be available when it is necessary to move equipment such as our tractor or our roller from one location to another.

If you have a CDL license and would be willing to help on occasion or if you know someone else who might be able to help us, please let us know.

If you would like to help but do not have a CDL license, we would be willing to pay for your training course. Either call 412-831-2030 or e-mail: info@montourtrail.org.